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SECURITY INFORMATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

# INFORMATION REPORT

25X1A

COUNTRY Italy

SUBJECT Mercury Production

25X1A

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1. The mercury mines of Italy are concentrated in the Monte Amiata district in the provinces of Siena and Grosseto, 75 miles north of Rome. The principal mines are the Abbadia San Salvatore, Siele, Argus, and Cerreto Piano.
2. Reserves are reputed to average one per cent mercury in Abbadia, three per cent mercury in Siele, and 0.6 per cent in Idria. The Monte Amiata district is characterized by a series of sedimentary rocks ranging from Triassic to Eocene in age and thickly capped by extrusive trachyte on Monte Amiata. The structure of the area is complex and is poorly known, but most of the ore bodies seem to lie along or near a major, north-trending fault or along associated cross fractures. Cinnabar is the only important ore mineral, and clay minerals are by far the most abundant products of hydrothermal alteration in the ore zone.
3. At the Abbadia mine, the horizontal cut-and-fill method of stoping is used with fill obtained from the stope, from other parts of the mine, or from the surface. Parts of some Italian mines, particularly the Siele and Argus, are in sound rock, which will stand indefinitely with little or no support. But the majority are in ground so heavy the workings must be lined with brick, wood blocks, or stone. All workings, except stopes, are circular or oval in section to distribute the essentially fluid pressure of the ground.
4. The Abbadia and Idria mines use tower or shaft furnaces for treating coarse ores and Cermak-Spirek furnaces for treating fine ores. Other Italian mines depend entirely on Cermak-Spirek furnaces.
5. The Abbadia, and at least eight other abandoned or idle mines in the district are under concession to perpetuity to the Societa Anonima Mineraria Monte Amiata, which is 53 per cent government owned or controlled. The Siele, Argus, and Cerreto Piano are privately owned and operated.

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6. Mercurio Europeo, and Italian-Spanish cartel was established in 1928 to control output, increase consumption, reduce competition, and maintain the price. At that time, Italian and Spanish producers controlled 80 per cent of world output. Sales were apportioned on the basis of 45 per cent for Italy. The output of both Italy and Spain is sold through this organization.
7. Reports on the extent of reserves are conflicting, but it appears that production can be maintained at current levels for many years.

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